A Journal of the Rockbucks 2d Voyage to N.o America

1779
May.

The Ship being repaired & refitted at Woolwich, and her bottom sheathed with Copper, sailed to Long Reach the 1st May. 1779 to take in her Guns & Powder; left the Downes the 20th following in company with the Grey hound & Ambuscade, and arrived at Spithead the 23d. As we were going into St. Hellens, we met Vice admiral Darby in the Royal George with 10 sail of the Line, going to escort Vice admrl. Arbuthnot with the New York & West India Fleets, (which were then lying in Torbay) out of the Channel.

At Spithead was Sir Charles Hardy, admiral of the White with all the western Squadron, amounting

to about 25 Sail of the Line.

The Rockbuck being destined to convoy a Fleet of Victuallers, which were lading at Cork, for the Army in North America, dropped down to St. Hellens the 8th June, and sailed from thence a few days after, in Company with Rear Admiral Edwards, and the East India Fleet. The wind soon after came contrary it was the 14th before we reached Torbay, where an express overtook us from the Admiralty, directing us to return to St. Hellens on account of the Brest Fleet having put to Sea. This event however detained us no longer than the 16th. when we were escorted down the Channel by Sir Charles Hardy with the Western Squadron (who had been previously joined by Vice Admiral Darby) and consisted of 29 Sail of the Line & 7 Frigates. Off Scilly I took

took my leave of the grand Fleet and arrived at Cork with my Convoy the next day.

altho' the Victualers had been reported to the Navy Board (who now had again undertaken to Victual the Army in America) to be ready, it was near three weeks after my arrival that I found them in any forwardness; the cause of which I took care to represent in a letter to the Controller. This delay gave me an opportunity of frequently being an Eye witness to the military Rage which about this time had seized all Ranks of People in this Country. Scarce a Man was to be seen in Cork without a Uniform; and the pretence for arming & Embodying themselves (for their associations were entirely without permission of Government) was to defend themselves against the Rage of the Papists in case of a Foreign Invasion. But from the general clamour that universally

prevailed, of the Country's being ruined & undone
by the Tyranny & oppression of the British
Laws in restricting their Trade &c, and
also by the new Importation agreement
of the City of Dublin & other Towns in
Ireland, it was not difficult to foresee
that a Plan was laid to take advantage
of the present distress of England, either
to obtain from it a Free Trade, or to bring
about a total seperation; and in my
Opinion nothing but a timely union
will prevent it. The News of the Spanish
1st July 1779 war seemed rather to raise the People's
Spirits than depress them, as every new
difficulty to England, added more weight
to the demands they were about to
make, by lessening its power to refuse them.

No Convoy having for some time past
been appointed for the West Indies, there were
fifty or sixty sail of Ships, in the Harbour
of Cork bound to the different Islands; in the

beginning of July the Leviathan Capt. Bowen arrived for their Convoy, which with the New York Fleet, amounted in the whole to 110 Sail. as the Harbour of Cork is quite open & entirely defenceless, I was extreamly apprehensive that the Enemy might gain Intelligence of so large & valuable Fleet being collected there, and think it an object worth their while to attack. I therefore kept the Delight Sloop, Captain Inglis, cruizing off the Port to give early notice of the Enemys approach, and resolved to sail the moment the Ships should be ready, without waiting for a fair wind. And accordingly on the 12th. July the whole Fleet turned out of the Harbour with the wind at SSE. without the least accident.

The westerly winds prevailed near a fortnight, but by persevering & taking advantage of the best slants, we found

ourselves

ourselves advanced by the 3d. August
about 200 leagues to the Wd. of Cape
Clear. The West India Fleet then
left me, and we pursued our Course
towards New York; passing about 40
leagues to the Northward of the Western
Islands to avoid the Enemys Cruizers;
afterwards I kept between the Latitudes
of 43.00 and 38.00. having upon the
whole very fine weather, with the
wind from SW. to NW. and sometimes
three or four days light Easterly wind.
and arrived at New York in eight weeks
& four days without losing one of the
Convoy.

Near the Banks of Newfoundland
I took a French Snow, called La Jeune
Francois, laden with Sugar & Coffee
from Guadaloupe bound to Bourdeaux.
which I carried with me to New York.
From the French Captain I learnt
that

that the Boston & Dean, two Rebel
Frigates of 32 Guns each, had been
Cruizing for a considerable time near the
South part of the Bank of Newfoundland
in hopes of falling in with the Cork Convoy,
and that they had left their Station
only two days before.

On my arrival at New York I found
Vice admiral Arbuthnot in the Command,
who had arrived with his large Convoy
from England only a few weeks before
me. The Ships he had with him was
the Europe Ruspel & Raisonable, with
several Frigates, and having received
intelligence from the Governor & admiral
at Jamaica, that they had no doubt of
the Enemy having a design to attack the
Island with a considerable Force, He
immediately determined to send the three
Line of Battle Ships as a reinforcement
to Sir Peter Parker, as did Sir Henry Clinton

20th Sept 1779

Resolve on sending Lord Cornwallis with
three thousand Men from the Army
to reinforce the Garrison. The
Transports & Men of war sailed over
the Bar 25th Sep.r and were on the Eve of
taking their final departure, when news
arrived of the Count D'Estaing, with 25
Sail of the Line, having been seen on
the Coast of Georgia. This Intelligence
at once put a Stop to the expedition
to Jamaica, dispelled our apprehensions
for the safety of that Island, and not
knowing what the Count's object might
be, caused the Admiral & General
to concert Measures for the
Security of New York.

Altho' Sir Henry Clinton's Army
at New York was said to amount, since
the last supply from England, to twelve
or fourteen thousand Men, yet such
an extraordinary Sickness prevailed among

the Troops that one third of these were unfit for duty. Every account from the Rebel Country mentioned great preparations that were making by General Washington to act in concert with Mons. D'Estaing against New York. These considerations, together with the probability of being cut off from the Garrison at Rhode Island by the French Fleet, strengthened by the little use we were likely to make of that Post in future, determined the General to evacuate the Post immediately; orders were accordingly sent off, and in a short time after the whole Garrison amounting to upwards of four thousand Men joined the army at New York. The Rebels took possession of the Island, and after destroying the works left it to the Inhabitants.

During this time the admiral was industriously employed in preparing a defence for the Harbour's Mouth. The

Ram

Bar was carefully & accurately surveyed; and the channel, sufficient to admit large Ships, was found to lay in such a compass, that it was judged practicable to block it up, by sinking a number of Vessels laden with Ballast, strongly moored, & fastened together by large Cables.

8 Oct. 1779 Whilst this Boom was preparing, Intelligence was received that the Rebels were meditating another attempt against Penobscot (a Port in New England which had been established by Brigadier General Mackleane from Halifax) and that several Frigates & other armed Vessels were sailed from Boston for that purpose. The Romulus & Rochuck were therefore dispatched to the relief of the Garrison, where they arrived the 14th. Oct.r and finding the whole Information to be false, and the Fort & Garrison in good condition, returned

back

back to New York. In my way I took the Orient Schooner from Marblehead bound to Cadiz, and the Revenge Privateer of new London, a Sloop of 12 Guns & 70 Men. this Vessel had reigned the whole war, generally cruized off New York, and had been remarkably successful.

For what purpose the Post was established at Penobscot I am at a loss to determine; the ostensible reasons however were, that it was in the Heart of the Country inhabited by Friends of Government, that it afforded Masts of all sizes in great abundance; the Great Towns of New England, depended upon it for their Fuel, and that it would be an excellent Port for our Cruizers that were Stationed on those Coasts; but from what I saw of it & heard about it during the week we were there, not one of these purposes are likely to be answered.

Penob=
=scot.

In the first place, altho' our Troops have been there six months they have not three Familys they call their Friends, and those live within our Lines. Most of the Men that took the oaths of allegiance on their arrival, carried arms & fought against them, when they were Besieged, and no Soldier of the Garrison can venture a Mile from the Fort, without being made a Prisoner. as to Masts, I searched for many Miles round, for a Tree to make the Rockwood a Main yard, and could not find a Stick of one; and several of the Inhabitants whom I saw, assured me they had never known of any Mast being exported from thence Larger than sufficient for a Sloop or a Schooner. Lumber there certainly is in great abundance, but there are only two Saw Mills in the district; and as to fuel, it is much easier procured for Boston Market at places not half the Distance. In regard to it's being a proper Port for Cruizers, the Distance of its

situation from the Sea, is so great, as to render it useless on that account; it is 24 Miles up an arm of the Sea, where there is little or no tide, and with the prevailing winds which are westerly & NW.t a Ship may be 5 or 6 days in reaching the Fort, after she has entered the Bay. An Instance of which happened whilst I was there to the Romulus. all that part of the Coast of New England, abounds in Harbours, and if a Post had been found to be necessary, many better places might have been chosen than Penobscot, particularly one called Townshend, which is a Peninsula close to the Sea, joining to the main by a very narrow Neck, and has a fine Harbour on each Side of it, without being commanded by any ground about it.